

**THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY
OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:**

1. A system for accessing and storing data pertaining to inspection and maintenance
5 of an equipment unit, said system comprising:

- (a) one or more memory buttons, each said memory button being adapted to permit electronic storage of data therein, and to permit reading of data stored therein;
- (b) a memory button probe, said probe being adapted for transferring data to, and for reading data stored in, the said one or more memory buttons;
- (c) a portable computing device having a memory;
- (d) a first data transfer link, whereby the portable computing device is in electronic communication with the memory button probe;
- (e) a central computer having a database for storing data relating to the equipment unit, said central computer being at a location remote from the equipment unit; and
- 15 (f) a second data transfer link, whereby the portable computing device is in electronic communication with the central computer and database;

wherein each memory button is mounted on or in the equipment unit.

2. The system of Claim 1 wherein the portable computing device is a personal digital
20 assistant.

3. The system of Claim 1 wherein the portable computing device is a laptop computer.

4. The system of Claim 1 wherein the second data transfer link is a wireless data transfer link.

5. The system of Claim 4 wherein the wireless data transfer link is a wireless connection through a computer network.

6. The system of Claim 4 wherein the wireless data transfer link is a connection through a telecommunications satellite system.

7. The system of Claim 1 wherein the central computer is a computer network server.

8. The system of Claim 7 wherein the computer network server is protected by a firewall.

9. The system of Claim 1 wherein the equipment unit is an aircraft.

10. A method of storing and retrieving inspection and maintenance information regarding an equipment unit, said method comprising the steps of:

20 (a) providing a memory button, said memory button being adapted to permit electronic storage of data therein, and to permit reading of data stored therein;

5 (b) installing said memory button on or in the equipment unit in convenient proximity to a selected inspection and maintenance point;

(c) providing a memory button probe adapted for transferring data to, and for reading data stored in, the memory button;

10 (d) providing a portable computing device having a memory, and having a first data transfer link whereby said portable computing device is in electronic communication with the memory button probe;

(e) providing, at a location remote from the equipment unit, a central computer having a database, said central computer having a second data transfer link whereby the central computer is in electronic communication with the portable computing device;

15 (f) as desired, storing technical information relating to the equipment unit in the database;

(g) as desired, storing technical information relating to the equipment unit in the memory button;

(h) as desired, engaging the memory button probe with the memory button, so as to read selected data stored therein, and to transmit said selected data via said first data transfer link to the portable computing device;

20 (i) as desired, transmitting a signal from the portable computing device to the central computer via said second data transfer link, instructing the central computer to transmit selected data from the database to the portable computing device via the second data transfer link;

(j) performing an inspection or maintenance task on the equipment unit;

5 (k) entering task performance information into the portable computing device relating to the performance of said inspection or maintenance task;

10 (l) electronically transmitting a signal, corresponding to said task performance information, from the portable computing device to the memory button, via said first data transfer link and the memory button probe, so as to store said task performance information on the memory button; and

15 (m) electronically transmitting a signal, corresponding to said task performance information, from the portable computing device to the central computer, via said second data transfer link, so as to store said task performance information in the database.

20 11. The method of Claim 10 wherein the portable computing device is a personal digital assistant.

12. The method of Claim 10 wherein the portable computing device is a laptop computer.

13. The method of Claim 10 wherein the second data transfer link is a wireless data transfer link.

20 14. The method of Claim 13 wherein the wireless data transfer link is a wireless connection through a computer network.

15. The method of Claim 13 wherein the wireless data transfer link is a connection through a telecommunications satellite system.

16. The method of Claim 10 wherein the central computer is a computer network server.

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17. The method of Claim 16 wherein the computer network server is protected by a firewall.

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18. The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of accessing the database of the computer network server from a user computer via connection to a computer network.

19. The method of Claim 18, further comprising the step of downloading data from the database of the computer network server and storing a back-up copy of the data on user computer.

15 20. The method of Claim 10 wherein the equipment unit is an aircraft.